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SUBJECT : A Personal Appraisal of Hassan's Regime
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The attached memorandum, "A Personal Appraisal of Hassan's Regime," was prepared by FSO Laurence Pope in response to a request that he sum up his impressions of the Moroccan political scene prior to his transfer after a year in Rabat. We commend it as a thoughtful analysis.

NEUMANN

State Department review completed

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A Personal Appraisal of Hassan's Regime

Introduction and Summary

In the fall of 1970 widely divergent estimates of the political situation in Morocco were made by the Embassy in Rabat and the Consulate General in Casablanca. For the Embassy, it was a time of optimism. The King had ended the "state of exception" in force since 1965, held a constitutional referendum which gave Morocco its third constitution in ten years, and parliamentary elections had resulted in the formation of a legislature. It might be, said the Embassy, that the summer of 1970 would be a "historical turning point" marking the beginning of an effort by the King to engage the Moroccan people in development. On the other hand, for the Consulate General in Casablanca, as for its mostly UNFP sources, the political horizon was ominous, the danger of the King's assassination remained, and the military was likely to play a critical role. It is easy, being wise after the event, to see who was more nearly right. (The reports are numbered Casablanca A-37 and Rabat A-167.)

Two coup attempts later, the winds of optimism about Hassan's regime are blowing again. It is frequently said that the King's position has been much improved by the popular enthusiasm generated by Morocco's participation in the recent Mideast fighting, and that the natural tendency to rally around a leader in time of crisis has strengthened Hassan's hold on power. His appearances in public since the summer of 1973, when he began to venture out of the confines of his palaces again, and the enthusiastic crowds which greeted him, are seen as proof that his personal popularity has risen. One journalist has spoken of "Hassan's comeback."

This memorandum takes a somewhat different view. It takes a quick look at various factors, and concludes that the King has not improved his political position, and that he has not taken any effective domestic measures of reform. What he has done in the aftermath of two coup attempts is to gather the reins of power more tightly in his own hands, continue by repressive means to destroy institutions independent of the palace, and in general return Morocco to a less Western, and more traditional Moorish, style of despotism. Among his Maghreb neighbors he is isolated. This does not augur well for the future of the regime, and probably means that the cycle of violence and repression which

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has characterized recent Moroccan history will continue. The U.S. should only decide to enter into closer relations with King Hassan with this firmly in mind.

The Setting--Consolidation of Royal Power, and Two Failed Coups

Like other developing countries, and maybe more than most, Morocco is a country of enormous contrasts between rich and poor where in some rural areas farmers still use wooden plows, while in the modern industrial sector young technocrats are familiar with the latest techniques of "management." Morocco is also one of the youngest countries in the world where half the population is now under 20, to cite just one striking statistic. To say these things is to restate the obvious, but it is just as well not to forget them. The gulf between rich and poor, which most observers say is growing, and the runaway population growth, are portents of instability and change which any Moroccan regime will have to reckon with. Thus, the only real question is when will change come, and what form will it take, and the present regime has not created the institutions through which change can come about gradually. In fact, in the years since Moroccan independence, such institutions have not prospered, and many have been suppressed altogether.

In 1956 there were at least two important political forces outside the palace--the Istiqlal Party, and the militant nationalists who had led the fight in the Sultan's name against the French occupier, the Army of Liberation. The French had also left behind some embryo institutions, which fell outside royal power, like the UMT (Union Marocaine du Travail), a lively press, and a certain conception of the rule of law. Since 1956, by a clever and ruthless combination of reward and punishment, and with the knowledge that the forty-four years of French occupation had only been a brief interruption in 300 years of Alaouite rule, the palace has almost atavistically set about reconsolidating its power. Its allies in this, the Fassi elite and the Army, have in return for this allegiance been allowed to divide the considerable spoils which a 20th century state provides.

The result is that the dominant fact in Morocco today, even more than in the past, is royal power and control. The Istiqlal Party has split like an amoeba into left and right wings. The party which still bears the name is a compliant shadow of its former self, while the party which is the real inheritor of its militant nationalist tradition, the UNFP, is split and partially outlawed. The UMT is still in being,

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but it is dormant as a political factor for reasons which probably relate to the palace connections of its leaders. The vestiges of modern, ministerial administration in the European tradition are still observed, but the Prime Minister is the King's brother-in-law, and ministers are in reality little more than senior clerks for the King with little power of decision, and no political standing of their own. An independent press still publishes, a bar association still convenes, a university still holds classes, and political parties still hold meetings, but this is increasingly a shadow-play empty of substance, with the principals going through the motions. Two coup attempts have exposed the vulnerability of the regime, and the dangers inherent in this growing concentration of royal power, which has destroyed the framework through which the social and economic pressures which are building in the country can be released.

At times the King, at least in the European half of his mind, has seemed aware of the problem. Most people took his post-Skhirat reference to "changing something in my way of governing" to be a reference to the necessity for sharing power, and the King did take certain steps in that direction in the fall of 1971 by undertaking negotiations with the parties of the opposition, mainly the Istiqlal and the UNFP. The negotiations with the opposition, however, which had taken a hopeful turn at the beginning, broke down on the central issue of royal power, and it became clear that Hassan was not prepared to change the rules of the game. Again, in the aftermath of the attempt to shoot down his plane by some Air Force officers in August, 1972, the King opened negotiations with the opposition, and again negotiations broke down for much the same reasons. Rumors circulated at the time that he was considering abdication, and "The Moroccan Monarchy at Bay" was the title of an article in "Le Monde Diplomatique" in December, 1972.

At this point, his enemies abroad, remnants of the Army of Liberation and elements of the UNFP which had preferred exile to legal opposition within Morocco, after apparently deciding in early 1973 that the time had come to take up arms against the King and give him the last push, launched armed attacks against government outposts in the traditional areas of Berber dissidence, prematurely announcing (through Radio Libya) that the "popular revolution had come." A popular joke was that greeting cards were being marked "p. p. h.," for "passera pas l'hiver" (he won't last the winter).

Hassan's "Comeback"

From this point on, things seemed to break the King's way. The "popular revolution" was quickly crushed by an efficient security

apparatus, and a more confident Hassan began to leave the palace, where he had shut himself up since August 16, and appear in public. In the winter of 1972 and spring of 1973 he had unilaterally extended Morocco's fishing limit to 70 miles, agitated Moroccan claims to the Spanish Sahara, and announced that he was sending a contingent of Moroccan troops to the Golan Heights, where, he said, the Israelis were likely to attack. He also announced in public speeches measures nationalizing the remaining foreign agricultural land, and requiring certain categories of foreign-owned businesses to cede majority control to Moroccans. All of these measures were accompanied with blasts of propaganda in the increasingly sycophantic government media, which trumpeted slogans like "Islamic Socialism" and "The Revolution of King and People" (echoing the Shah's "White Revolution" in Iran).

Whatever finally comes of these initiatives (not much so far), it is worth noting in passing that all of the measures announced by the King had foreign interests as their targets. Spain suffered most from the extension of the fishing limit and the Saharan claims, while France bore the brunt of Moroccanization and land recovery, and the sending of troops to Syria naturally aimed at the Zionist enemy. Their effect on the living conditions of most of the population was limited. So far, land recovery has not changed anything for the agricultural peasantry which makes up some 70 per cent of the population. The land was not redistributed, and a government-owned company merely took the place of the big landowners. "Moroccanization" required the foreign owners of certain categories of businesses to turn over a majority share in their operations to Moroccan entrepreneurs who seem to be coming exclusively from the same segment of the population, the shorthand for which is "the Fassi elite," which has always controlled the economy. In fact, it is probably fair to say that the people who took the King's reforms the most seriously were the foreigners affected. Moroccans realized that the rules of the game, and the winners, remained the same.

The Mideast War

The Mideast war, and Moroccan participation in it, is often said to have been another factor in improving the King's position and increasing his popularity, and there is no doubt that his foresight in sending troops to the front at a time when most people discounted the possibility of fighting has been admired. Domestic troubles have been submerged while attention was centered on the battle and the King, exploiting his

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position as Minister of Defense and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, has made the fighting in which Moroccan troops reportedly suffered heavy losses into a personal political victory.

In the longer term, however, and as the war fever wears off, a much more important consequence of Morocco's participation in the Mideast fighting will be its effect on the Royal Armed Forces, which are, of course, the key to the King's remaining in power. An army exists to fight, and few things are so important to it as the lessons it draws from its experience in the wars it is sent to fight in. The Moroccan expeditionary force in Syria reportedly suffered heavy losses-- estimates range between 150-700 killed out of a total force of 3,000 men, and if the ratio of wounded to killed was 5/1, casualties must have been very heavy indeed. In addition, there have been reports that the troops were unfamiliar with the weapons they were asked to use; and that their coordination with the Syrian command under which they fought was less than perfect. It should be borne in mind that the total control over decisions relating to the Armed Forces which the King has assumed is a two-edged sword. It allows him to manipulate the Army, but it also makes him directly responsible for failures.

On the domestic political front, the Mideast war gave the King an occasion to demonstrate his iron control over the country. To many observers, it seemed likely at the outbreak of hostilities that U.S. interests in Morocco would not escape unscathed, particularly after the announcement of U.S. resupply of Israel, and many expected that popular feeling would find expression in demonstrations in which the U.S. would be a target. The precedent of the 1967 Mideast war, when there were scattered incidents of violence, and cars were burned, was present in many minds. The Jewish community in Casablanca was nervous. That there were no major incidents of the kind we feared during the recent war is doubtless partly due to initial Arab successes, but it may also be an indication of the difference between the Morocco of 1967 and 1973, and tighter control exercised by the security services and the palace. Although the movements of the Sixth Fleet were widely publicized in the local press, the latter was never allowed even to hint at a connection between the communications facilities at Kenitra, Sidi Yahya, and Bouknadel, and the Fleet.

Isolation in the Maghreb

While some Western observers have seen an improvement in King Hassan's position, his relations with his neighbors in the Maghreb

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have taken a sharp turn for the worse. A Moroccan-Algerian-Mauritanian summit held in Agadir in July, which was supposed to result in a common position on the Spanish Sahara, was a complete and public failure. Relations with Libya have been bad at least since Libyan radio hailed the Skhirat coup attempt, and relations with Algeria, Tunisia, and Mauritania have also worsened. The King evidently believes that Algeria abetted the rebels who were behind the attacks in March, and there is considerable evidence to support this conclusion. The hard-headed Algerians seem to have decided not to put all of their money on Hassan. For reasons which appear to be essentially subjective and personal, Morocco's relations with fellow moderate Tunisia have also been bad. During the non-aligned summit in September, which Hassan embarrassingly failed at the last minute to attend, Bourguiba launched a proposal for Maghrebian unity which deliberately excluded Morocco, Tunis has withdrawn its Ambassador from Rabat, and Rabat has not yet replaced its envoy to Tunis. Mauritania, increasingly in the Algerian camp, and irritated by differences with Morocco over Spanish Sahara, currently does not have an Ambassador in Rabat either.

These differences with Maghreb neighbors, and particularly the quarrel with Algeria, increase the possibility that further subversion could find a base from which to launch attacks against Hassan's regime. They also are indications that the King's neighbors, who are in a good position to know the realities of the Moroccan situation, may be taking a dim view of his prospects.

Repression

In a Morocco where power is increasingly centered in the palace, and where independent institutions have become progressively enfeebled, it has become difficult to maintain the fiction of domestic "liberalism" with which the King has in the past been identified in the West. In the past, outrageous examples of ruthlessness like the Ben Barka kidnapping have always been balanced by the image of a Western-oriented enlightened monarch who was admired by moderate socialists like Jean Lacouture (who is no longer persona grata in Morocco). Throughout the 1960's, General Oufkir was the bad guy, and he drew off some of the blame for conduct of which Westerners disapproved. Now, however, Hassan's regime seems to be increasingly dropping the veils of constitutionalism, parliamentary forms, and the rule of law.

A good example of this tendency toward increased authoritarianism was the Kenitra court martial of the summer of 1973. The palace used the prosecution of the rebels who had been implicated in the

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March attacks in the Middle Atlas, and urban terrorists who had been active about the same time, to attack the UNFP, whose leaders were accused of complicity with the subversives. Some semblance of legality was retained in the beginning. Although the trial was a military one, the tribunal was presided over by a civilian magistrate, and over 100 defense lawyers, including many of the country's prominent opposition politicians, were allowed to plead and to cross-examine witnesses, and almost verbatim accounts of testimony were published in the daily press. The testimony itself, however, presented a picture of unchecked police repression. Virtually all of those who testified said that they had been tortured, and forced to sign false confessions which they had never been allowed to read. Typical of the testimony was that of one UNFP leader, a Kenitra surgeon named Omar Khattabi. Khattabi showed his scars to the court, and told how the police, after compelling him to sign a false statement under torture, had given him a revolver, and suggested he use it on himself. When he pulled the trigger, he said, the revolver turned out to be empty.

As the trial went on, it became clear that although the prosecution had a tight case against certain rebels who had been arrested with weapons, they failed completely to prove that the UNFP intellectuals on trial had been involved in the violence, and the verdict, handed down on August 30, reflected this. Sixteen of the Middle Atlas rebels and urban terrorists were sentenced to death, others got long jail sentences, while the UNFP members were all acquitted, and ordered released.

Instead of being released, however, the some 80 persons involved (including Dr. Khattabi) were loaded into police vans and taken off to unknown destinations, where they remain at this writing, almost three months later. A laconic statement by the police announced that they had been arrested in connection with another "investigation," but there has been no move to put them on trial again. Later, the King did carry out another part of the Kenitra verdict, executing on November 1 fifteen of the sixteen men condemned to death.

An Air of "Ancien Régime"

A few words need to be said about the social background against which these developments are taking place.

There is an ambience of excess in the Moroccan bourgeoisie which is impossible to define, but which cannot be ignored. The houses of the Fassi elite in the chic suburbs of Rabat and Casablanca continue to be built and furnished in the richest way imaginable. In these suburbs

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a Spanish-style house stands next to a model of an English country house, while inside the high walls, past the guard house and the dogs, one can see landscaped gardens. Architects who are restrained by no considerations of money or taste are given free rein; building goes on over long years, with results that advertise the costs involved. One of the most visible houses of this sort has recently been completed on the outskirts of Rabat by the leader of the Istiqlal, Allal Al Fassi, furnished in the best Syrian Louis XV style, no expense spared.

The tone for these excesses of conspicuous consumption is set at the highest level, in the palace. King Hassan's life style, which is that of a traditional Sultan of Morocco with the added element of almost limitless wealth, is well enough known, and needs no underlining here.

When the King, who is understandably wary of planes after August 16, 1972, wanted to go to the recent Arab summit in Algiers, he rented a French passenger ship to take him. He has put up over \$100,000 in prize money alone for a golf tournament he is sponsoring in Rabat in December. Examples of this kind could be multiplied.

The Politics of Baraka

The concentration of power in the palace, the destruction of Westernized institutions as political facts, and the increase in the level of repression of which the conduct of the Kenitra trial is one example, have given the regime more and more the look of the traditional Moorish theocracy it has essentially been all along. There are few libertarian impulses in the Moroccan character. Moroccans look to government not to balance competing interests, as in the West, but to establish order and hierarchy, and their best hope is that government will not demand too much of them. The throne is a symbol of legitimacy, and the King is held in awe as the inheritor of a great dynasty and as the mystical incarnation of national sovereignty. His very presence is thought to bring blessing, baraka, and his narrow escapes from death first from over a thousand men, and then from jet fighters, is seen as proof of divine favor. He fascinates his countrymen, and he can be expected to make the most of this in the future.

Meanwhile, Western-style politics will not flourish. Thanks to the King's efficient mixture of corruption with favors and punishment with torture and imprisonment, there are few politicians of stature left in

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Morocco, and their conditions for sharing power would be unacceptable to him. While he still could attract some party politicians to ministries, and might even hold elections of a kind, these would be transparent facades under present circumstances. Political and economic stagnation seems to be the more likely prospect, with the consequence that the sterile cycle of violence and repression which has characterized recent Moroccan history will continue. King Hassan may indeed be at the "summit of his reign," as one well-placed observer has recently said, but from the summit it is all downhill.

Consequences for the U.S.

We should, in analyzing the political situation, be hard-headed enough not to confuse the current improvement in bilateral relations with an improvement in Hassan's political prospects. His anxious desire to have us for a friend may be a sign of weakness rather than of strength. The attitude of the Army in the wake of the Mideast fighting may be crucial. We should remain alert for signs of trouble, and not be misled by the vestiges of Western-style institutions which still manage to carry on into thinking of the regime as a "liberal" one, as it is sometimes portrayed. Increasingly it resembles the traditional, despotic "makhzen" of Moroccan history.

Also, in view of recent Moroccan history, and the inherent fragility of a one-man regime, we should think twice about becoming inextricably identified with Hassan in a way which might expose us to the reprisals of a successor regime. Our military aid in particular should be as discreet as possible, and we should under no circumstances become involved in advising the King on "counterinsurgency" or the like.

Laurence Pope *LP*

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